

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
AT GREENEVILLE

LANNY ALLEN MARKLAND,

Plaintiff,

v.

CLYDE GARLAND, CITY OF
ELIZABETHTON, TN, and CARTER
COUNTY JAIL AND STAFF,

Defendants.

No. 2:21-CV-00009-JRG-CRW

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

Plaintiff, a former inmate of the Carter County Jail now incarcerated in Virginia, has filed a pro se complaint for violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1983 [Doc. 2] and a motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [Doc. 1]. For the reasons set forth below, Plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [*Id.*] will be **GRANTED**, and Plaintiff shall have thirty days from the date of entry of this order to file an amended complaint.

I. FILING FEE

It appears from Plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [*Id.*] that he is unable to pay the filing fee. Accordingly, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, this motion will be **GRANTED**.

Because Plaintiff is a prisoner, he will be **ASSESSED** the civil filing fee of \$350.00. The custodian of Plaintiff's inmate trust account will be **DIRECTED** to submit to the Clerk, U.S. District Court, 220 West Depot Street, Suite 200, Greeneville, Tennessee 37743, as an initial partial payment, whichever is the greater of: (a) twenty percent (20%) of the average monthly deposits to Plaintiff's inmate trust account; or (b) twenty percent (20%) of the average monthly

balance in his inmate trust account for the six-month period preceding the filing of the complaint. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)(A) and (B). Thereafter, the custodian of Plaintiff's inmate trust account shall submit twenty percent (20%) of Plaintiff's preceding monthly income (or income credited to Plaintiff's trust account for the preceding month), but only when such monthly income exceeds ten dollars (\$10.00), until the full filing fee of three hundred fifty dollars (\$350.00) as authorized under 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a) has been paid to the Clerk. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2).

To ensure compliance with this fee-collection procedure, the Clerk will be **DIRECTED** to provide a copy of this memorandum and order to the custodian of inmate accounts at the institution where Plaintiff is now confined and to the Court's financial deputy. This order shall be placed in Plaintiff's prison file and follow him if he is transferred to another correctional institution.

II. COMPLAINT SCREENING

A. Standard

Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act ("PLRA"), district courts must screen prisoner complaints and shall, at any time, *sua sponte* dismiss any claims that are frivolous or malicious, fail to state a claim for relief, or are against a defendant who is immune. *See, e.g.*, 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915(A); *Benson v. O'Brian*, 179 F.3d 1014 (6th Cir. 1999). The dismissal standard that the Supreme Court set forth in *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009) and in *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007) "governs dismissals for failure state a claim under [28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A] because the relevant statutory language tracks the language in Rule 12(b)(6)." *Hill v. Lappin*, 630 F.3d 468, 470–71 (6th Cir. 2010). Thus, to survive an initial review under the PLRA, a complaint "must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to 'state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.'" *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570).

Formulaic and conclusory recitations of the elements of a claim are insufficient to state a plausible claim for relief. *Id.* at 681. Likewise, an allegation that does not raise a plaintiff's right to relief "above a speculative level" fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570. However, courts liberally construe pro se pleadings and hold them to a less stringent standard than lawyer-drafted pleadings. *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972).

A claim for violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1983 requires a plaintiff to establish that a person acting under color of state law deprived him a federal right. 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

B. Analysis

Plaintiff alleges that although he was cooperative and not resisting arrest, an officer assaulted him while he was handcuffed by grabbing him and slamming his face into a metal gun safe, before attempting to provoke Plaintiff to fight him [Doc. 2 at 2]. Plaintiff alleges that this assault was on video and the Carter County Jail staff and officers witnessed it without intervening [*Id.*]. Plaintiff has sued Clyde Garland, the Carter County Jail and Staff, and the City of Elizabethton, and seeks punishment of unnamed officers and compensatory damages [*Id.* at 2–3].

However, Plaintiff does not state how Defendant Garland was personally involved in the incident alleged in his complaint, and the complaint therefore fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted under § 1983 as to him. *Frazier v. Michigan*, 41 F. App'x 762, 764 (6th Cir. 2002) (providing that "a complaint must allege that the defendants were personally involved in the alleged deprivation of federal rights" to state a claim upon which relief may be granted under § 1983). Further, neither the Carter County Jail nor its Jail Staff is a person that may be sued under § 1983. *Marbry v. Corr. Med. Serv.*, No. 99-6706, 2000 WL 1720959, at *2 (6th Cir. Nov. 6, 2000) (holding that "the Shelby County Jail is not an entity subject to suit under §1983"); *Artry v.*

Wilson Cty. Jail, No. 3:19-CV-00309, 2019 WL 4748321, at *2 (M.D. Tenn. Sept. 30, 2019) (holding that neither a county jail nor a group of its officers are entities subject to suit under § 1983) (citations omitted). Additionally, Plaintiff has set forth nothing from which the Court can plausibly infer that the City of Elizabethton or Carter County may be liable under § 1983 for the incident underlying his complaint. *Monell v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 436 U.S. 658, 708 (1978) (Powell, J., concurring) (explaining that a municipality can only be held liable for harms that result from a constitutional violation when that underlying violation resulted from “implementation of [its] official policies or established customs”).

Thus, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, as filed. Nevertheless, the Court will allow Plaintiff thirty (30) days from the date of entry of this order to file an amended complaint with a short and plain statement of facts setting forth the alleged violation of his constitutional rights, the approximate date thereof, and the individual(s) responsible.¹ See *LaFountain v. Harry*, 716 F.3d 944, 951 (6th Cir. 2013) (holding that “[u]nder Rule 15(a) a district court can allow a plaintiff to amend his complaint even when the complaint is subject to dismissal under the PLRA”).

III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above:

1. Plaintiff’s motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* [Doc. 1] is **GRANTED**;
2. Plaintiff is **ASSESSED** the civil filing fee of \$350.00;
3. The custodian of Plaintiff’s inmate trust account is **DIRECTED** to submit the filing fee to the Clerk in the manner set forth above;

¹ Plaintiff is **NOTIFIED** that the Court may only address the merits of claims that relate back to Plaintiff’s original complaint under Rule 15 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Accordingly, Plaintiff **SHALL NOT** attempt to set forth any claims in this amended complaint which were not set forth in her original complaint or do not otherwise relate back under Rule 15, as any such claims may be **DISMISSED**.

4. The Clerk is **DIRECTED** to provide a copy of this memorandum and order to the custodian of inmate accounts at the institution where Plaintiff is now confined and to the Court's financial deputy;
5. The Clerk is **DIRECTED** to send Plaintiff a form § 1983 complaint;
6. Plaintiff has thirty (30) days from the date of entry of this order to file an amended complaint in the manner set forth above;
7. Plaintiff is **NOTIFIED** that any amended complaint he files will completely replace the previous complaint;
8. Plaintiff is also **NOTIFIED** that if he fails to timely comply with this order, this action will be dismissed for failure to prosecute and to follow the orders of this Court; and
9. Plaintiff is **ORDERED** to immediately inform the Court and Defendants or their counsel of record of any address changes in writing. Pursuant to Local Rule 83.13, it is the duty of a pro se party to promptly notify the Clerk and the other parties to the proceedings of any change in his or her address, to monitor the progress of the case, and to prosecute or defend the action diligently. E.D. Tenn. L.R. 83.13. Failure to provide a correct address to this Court within fourteen days of any change in address may result in the dismissal of this action.

So ordered.

ENTER:

s/J. RONNIE GREER
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE